

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ROME
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 20038

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR
SUBJECT: LEBEDEV AND PRIMAKOV ON DETENTE

1. SUMMARY. IN WAKE OF RECENT OPPSABFNPVOTOPS#AND ARTICLES
TOUTING DETENTE IN SPECIFIC AREAS, DEC 23 PRAVDA RETURNS TO
BROAD THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION OF DETENTE WITH MAJOR
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COMMENTARY BY RECTOR OF MFA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INSTITUTE LEBEDEV, BACKED UP BY REVIEW OF NEW LEBEDEV BOOK BY
MEMO DEPUTY DIRECTOR PRIMAKOV IN DEC 22 IZVESTIYA.
BETWEEN INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING PASSAGES DEFINING
DETENTE AS OBJECTIVE PROCESS RESULTING FROM FAVORABLE
CHANGES IN WORLD CORRELATION OF FORCES (ALBEIT WITH

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS" IN PLAY). LEBEDEV SANDWICHES REBUTTAL OF WESTERN DISTORTIONS ON POINTS WHICH MAKE SOVIETS NERVOUS: TECHNOLOGICAL BACKWARDNESS, DIMINISHING POLITICAL RETURNS ON MILITARY STRENGTH, INCOMPATIBILITY OF DETENTE AND "CLASS STRUGGLE" IN WORLD AFFAIRS. PRIMAKOV GIVES MORE CREDIT TO BREZHNEV, AND SEES DETENTE AS MORE INCOMPATIBLE WITH ARMS RACE, THAN LEBEDEV, BUT BUILDS ON SAME THEORETICAL GROUND. PERHAPS INTENDED AS CORRECTIVES TO RATHER FAVORABLE RECENT TREATMENT OF DETENTE AND AS WARNINGS THAT LEVERAGE WILL NOT WORK, THESE PIECES STILL DO NOT MANAGE TO ESCAPE BASIC SOVIET "DETENTE DILEMMA:" IF PROCESS IS OBJECTIVE, NOTHING CAN HURT IT, BUT IF "SUBJECTIVE FACTORS" PLAY A ROLE, THE USSR IS AS SUBJECT TO LEVERAGE AS ANY OTHER PLAYER. END SUMMARY.

2. PRAVDA DEC 23 RETURNS TO BROAD THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION OF DETENTE, I.E., BEYOND SPECIFIC AREAS LIKE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS (ARBATOV DEC 11) OR NON-PROLIFERATION (MIKHAILOV DEC 22), WITH COMMENTARY BY RECTOR OF MFA'S INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS N.I. LEBEDEV, WRITING AS DOCTOR OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES. HE IS BACKED UP BY IMEMO DEPUTY DIRECTOR YEVGENIY PRIMAKOV, IN HIS AVATAR AS CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY, IN DEC 22 IZVESTIYA REVIEW OF RECENTLY-ISSUED LEBEDEV BOOK ENTITLED "A NEW STAGE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS." ASSUME FBIS WILL CARRY TEXTS. FOLLOWING POINTS STRUCK US.

3. LEBEDEV MAKES BASIC THEORETICAL POINTS IN INTRO-CONFIDENTIAL

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DUCTION AND CONCLUSION. RELAXATION OF INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS IS "LEADING TENDENCY," AND THIS IS "MAIN RESULT" OF PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY. IT IS PRODUCT OF "DEEP PROCESSES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT" AT TURN OF 1960'S AND 1970'S AND EFFORTS OF USSR, OTHER "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES AND ALL MEN OF GOOD WILL. THE "DECISIVE ROLE" WAS PLAYED BY THE CHANGE IN THE WORLD CORRELATION OF FORCES IN FAVOR OF "SOCIALISM." IN CONCLUSION, LEBEDEV CALLS DETENTE "AN OBJECTIVE PROCESS...IN NO WAY CALLED INTO EXISTENCE BY SUBJECTIVE FACTORS, ALTHOUGH THEY PLAYED AND PLAY A DEFINITE ROLE."

4. SANDWICHED BETWEEN, THE BULK OF THE ARTICLE IS DEVOTED TO A DEFINITION OF WHAT DETENTE IS NOT, IN FAMILIAR FORM OF REBUTTAL OF WESTERN DISTORTIONS: --THE USSR WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP CONFRONTATION WITH THE WEST UNDER INFLUENCE OF SUCH FACTORS AS WESTERN MILITARY-ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND WESTERN PEACE-

MAKING ACTIVITY. FALSE: THE "WORLD SOCIALIST SYSTEM" WAS CREATED AND ACHIEVED SUCH POWER THAT IT CANNOT ONLY DEFEND ITSELF BUT "DELIVER THE APPROPRIATE CRUSHING BLOW" IF ATTACKED.

--BOTH THE U.S. AND THE USSR "DEPARTED FROM THEIR PREVIOUS POSITIONS" BECAUSE THEY HAD AMASSED SUCH PILES OF ARMAMENTS THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER RATIONAL MEANS OF ACHIEVING POLITICAL GOALS. FALSE, SAYS LEBEDEV: THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES "NEVER ABSOLUTIZED MILITARY FORCE," AND WERE ALWAYS IN FAVOR OF PUTTING SYSTEMIC CONFLICT IN ECONOMIC CHANNELS, WITH OBSERVANCE OF PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

--THE USSR NEEDS DETENTE BECAUSE OF ITS "TECHNOLOGICAL BACKWARDNESS," AND IS DETENTE'S ONLY BENEFICIARY. FALSE: SOVIET TECHNOLOGICAL SUCCESSES--FIRST SPUTNIK, FIRST MAN IN SPACE, FIRST NUCLEAR ICE-BREAKER--ARE KNOWN TO THE WHOLE WORLD, AND WITH LESS THAN ONE AND ONE-HALF PERCENT OF ITS SOCIAL PRODUCT

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IN WESTERN TRADE, LATTER HAS "NO ESSENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY," ALTHOUGH ECONOMIC COOPERATION OF COURSE CREATES "MATERIAL BASIS OF DETENTE" AND STRENGTHENS PEACE AND SECURITY.

--DETENTE HAS BEEN TRIED BEFORE, AS APPEASEMENT, IN THE 1930'S, AND FAILED BECAUSE OF TOTALITARIANISM. FALSE: ONLY ANTI-SOVIETISM CAN EQUATE COMMUNISM AND NAZISM.

-- DETENTE IS NO GOOD UNTIL USSR LIBERALIZES ITSELF. FALSE AGAIN: THIS IS NOTHING BUT "DIRECT INTERFERENCE IN OUR COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS."
-- FINALLY, THERE IS THE MYTH OF THE SOVIET THREAT PUT OUT BY "MOUTHPIECES OF THE MILITARY-INDUSTRY COMPLEX" LIKE "FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE USSR F. KOHLER," WHO CLAIMS SOVIETS MERELY USE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE TO WORK OUT NEW STRATEGY OF VICTORY AND CALLS FOR MORE ARMS SPENDING. FALSE: THEY DO NOT OR WILL NOT RECOGNIZE OBJECTIVE CHARACTER OF PROCESS, ETC.

5. LEBEDEV QUOTES BREZHNEV AS A SOURCE; PRIMAKOV STRESSES HIS PERSONAL ROLE AS ARCHITECT OF POLICY. PRIMAKOV IS ALSO HEAVY ON THE COMPATIBILITY OF DETENTE AND "CLASS STRUGGLE" AND ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF DETENTE AND THE ARMS RACE--WHICH "CAN WRECK" THE POSITIVE TENDENCIES, ACCORDING TO HIM. BUT THE THEORETICAL BASIS--THE CHANGING CORRELATIONS OF FORCES IN FAVOR OF "SOCIALISM" CORRECTLY READ AND EXPLOITED BY THE PARTY--IS THE SAME.

6. COMMENT. LEBEDEV IS NO LIGHTWEIGHT, AND HE READS AS IF HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO SUPPLY A THEORETICAL CORRECTIVE TO ANY MISAPPREHENSION CONCERNING BASIC SOVIET APPROACH TO DETENTE WHICH RECENT SPATE OF MORE OR LESS FORWARD-LOOKING SPEECHES AND ARTICLES MIGHT HAVE PROVOKED IN READERS' MINDS. POINTS HE MAKES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT NEW, BUT TOGETHER THEY PROVIDE A USEFUL COMPENDIUM OF ISSUES WHICH MAKE SOVIETS NERVOUS: TECHNOLOGICAL BACKWARDNESS, DIMINISHING POLITICAL RETURNS ON MILITARY STRENGTH, DETENTE AND CLASS STRUGGLE AS STRANGE BEDFELLOWS. BUT HOWEVER MUCH LEBEDEV'S PIECE IS INTENDED AS A WARNING THAT LEVERAGE WILL NOT WORK, HE CANNOT ESCAPE THE USSR'S "DETENTE DILEMMA:" IF RELAXATION OF TENSIONS IS "OBJECTIVE," NOTHING CAN HURT IT; IF "SUBJECTIVE FACTORS PLAYED AND PLAY A DEFINITE ROLE," LEVERAGE CERTAINLY EXISTS, AND AFFECTS THE SOVIETS AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER PLAYER. MATLOCK

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.

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